

## **PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE RULES 2026**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. Purpose of this Document**

This document sets out the full participation, registration, eligibility, coaching, safeguarding, fixture, and playing rules for Primary Rugby League (U6–U11) for the 2026 season. It brings together all expectations for clubs, coaches, volunteers, festival hosts, and parents into one clear, nationally consistent rulebook.

#### **1.2. Why Primary Rugby League Has Its Own Rules**

Primary Rugby League is a developmental, non-competitive environment designed specifically for children aged 6 to 11. The needs of this age group are fundamentally different from those of older players, and therefore the standard RFL Operational Rules, which govern competitive Rugby League, are not appropriate for this stage of the game.

To ensure that Primary Rugby League remains:

- Child centred
- Safe
- Inclusive
- Development focused
- Enjoyable for all participants

A separate set of rules is required.

The RFL (Rugby Football League) have become the first governing body and sport in the UK to partner with national campaign Play Their Way to transform the way children and young people are coached and take part in rugby league.

The Play Their Way campaign was launched in 2023 to transform the way children and young people are coached by prioritising their rights, needs and enjoyment in a 'child-first' approach.

#### **1.3. Relationship to the RFL Operational Rules**

Primary Rugby League sits outside the RFL Operational Rules because:

- There are no leagues, league tables, or competition points.
- There are no disciplinary sanctions, sin bins, or match official reports.
- Fixtures are festival-based and flexible.
- Player movement follows simple, development-led rules.
- Coaches may be on the field at younger age groups.
- Coaches often officiate matches.
- The Safe Play Code replaces the full contact laws used in competitive Rugby League.
- Eligibility checks at U9–U11 use ID Cards.

However, Primary Rugby League remains fully aligned with the RFL's wider governance framework, including:

- Safeguarding
- DBS requirements
- Coaching qualifications
- Concussion protocols
- Codes of Conduct
- GameDay registration
- Player Dispensation Policy
- Respect and Tackle It policies

These requirements apply equally to all clubs and volunteers involved in Primary Rugby League activity.

#### **1.4. Status of this Document**

This document is the authoritative source for all Primary Rugby League activity in 2026. It replaces any previous local variations, informal practices, or historic interpretations. All clubs, coaches, volunteers, and festival hosts must follow the rules and guidance set out here.

#### **1.5. Annual Review**

Primary Rugby League rules are reviewed annually to ensure they remain developmentally appropriate, safe, and aligned with best practice. Any updates will be communicated to clubs before the start of each season. The RFL reserves the right to amend these rules during the season where required for safeguarding, welfare, or legal reasons.

#### **1.6. How to Use This Document**

These Primary Rugby League Rules are organised into clear sections so that clubs, coaches, volunteers, and festival hosts can quickly find the information they need. The document is structured as follows:

- Introduction & Purpose
- Registration & Eligibility
- Coaching Requirements
- Safeguarding & Welfare Requirements
- Fixtures, Festivals & Match Administration
- Cubs/Tots Activity
- Safe Play Code
- Under-7 Rules
- Under-8 Rules
- Under-9 Rules
- Under-10 Rules
- Under-11 Rules

## 2. Registration & Eligibility

### 2.1 General Requirements

All Players must be registered on GameDay before taking part in any training, festivals, matches, or club activities. Registration ensures compliance with safeguarding, insurance, and welfare requirements.

### 2.2 Registration System

Clubs must ensure that all Players are correctly registered on GameDay with accurate personal details, including date of birth, school year, and emergency contact information. Only registered Players may participate in Primary Rugby League activity.

### 2.3 Age Ranges

2.3.1 Primary Rugby League is open to children in academic Years 1 to 6.

2.3.2 Mixed-gender Rugby League is permitted up to and including Under-11s.

2.3.3 Each team's age band is determined at the start of the season and remains fixed for the full season, even if matches are played after children move into the next school year.

Age group	School Year	True age range	Additional Age Range (Players in the Year Below Playing Up)
Under 6's	Year 1	1.09.19 - 31.08.20	N/A
Under 7's	Year 2	1.09.18 - 31.08.19	N/A
Under 8's	Year 3	1.09.17 - 31.08.18	N/A
Under 9's	Year 4	1.09.16 - 31.08.17	N/A
Under 10's	Year 5	1.09.15 - 31.08.16	1.09.16 - 31.08.17
Under 11s	Year 6	1.09.14 - 31.08.15	1.09.15 - 31.08.16

2.3.4 Players must play within their designated age group, based on their school year and date of birth.

#### 2.3.5 Flexibility at U6–U8 (Tag Rugby)

U6s may participate with U7s, and U7s may participate with U8s where this supports inclusion, team numbers, or festival delivery.

The RFL's strong preference is that children play within their true age group, and any movement between U6–U8 should be used sparingly and only for practical reasons, not selection or competitive advantage.

For the avoidance of doubt, flexibility between U6–U8 applies only within the non-contact Primary Rugby League environment; it does not permit players to move together into a contact age group, and U7 players who participate with U8s in one season must return to their true age group the following season and will not be eligible to move into U9s and full contact.

### **2.3.6 Registration to the Club and Age Group**

At Primary Rugby League age groups, players register to the Club and to the age group, not to an individual team. Coaches are responsible for organising players within that age group and may move children between teams to support inclusion, development, and playing numbers.

Movement between teams within the same age group does not require a transfer and must not be used for selection, competitive advantage, or the creation of "A/B teams".

### **2.4 Playing Up (U9–U11 Only)**

From Under 9s upward, players may play up one age group if:

- They fall within the permitted extra age range
- Parents/carers agree
- Clubs/coaches agree
- The arrangement supports the child's development and well-being

### **2.5 Playing Down (Not Permitted)**

Players must not play down into a younger age group under any circumstances.

The only exception is through the formal dispensation process, which is available [HERE](#).

### **2.6 ID Cards (U9–U11)**

ID Cards consist of the player's GameDay profile and photograph. They must be available on request at festivals and fixtures.

ID cards are not required for the U6 – U8 age groups. Although players must still register as per 2.2.

### **2.7 Transfer to another Club**

In line with the RFL Operational Rules, a maximum of three incoming transfers per age group is permitted within a season. This limit is designed to support balanced team numbers and prevent unnecessary accumulation of players. The Management Group may approve additional incoming transfers for an age group to support player welfare and team viability.

### **2.8 Responsibility for Compliance**

Clubs are responsible for ensuring that all registration and eligibility rules are followed. Coaches and team managers must check that all players are correctly registered before any activity begins.

### **3. Coaching Requirements**

All Primary Rugby League activity must be led by a Level 1 Licensed Coach. Volunteers and Game Coaches may support delivery but cannot lead activity independently. A Level 1 Licensed Coach must be present and responsible for all training, festivals, and matches.

#### **3.1 Minimum Coaching Standards**

Every team participating in Primary Rugby League must be led by a minimum Level 1 Licensed Coach. A Level 1 Licensed Coach is an individual who has completed the RFL Level 1 Coaching Qualification, holds a valid Enhanced DBS, has completed the Safeguarding and Protecting Children (SPC) course, and has completed the Primary Coach Confident online course. Coaches must maintain their licence in line with RFL requirements and may not coach or assist with any Primary Rugby League activity until all elements of the licence are in place.

For U6–U8 (Tag Rugby League), clubs may also use volunteers who have completed the Introduction to Tag Rugby League course to support delivery. These volunteers may assist with coaching and festival activity under the supervision and direction of a Level 1 Licensed Coach. They are not permitted to lead activity independently.

To ensure safe and effective delivery, clubs must maintain appropriate adult-to-child ratios at all Primary Rugby League sessions. As a minimum standard, there must be one adult to six children for ages 4–8, and one adult to eight children for ages 9–12, with at least one Level 1 Licensed Coach present at all times. Where younger age groups or players with additional needs are involved, clubs should increase staffing levels to ensure the activity remains safe, well-managed, and developmentally appropriate. Volunteers and Game Coaches may count towards supervision ratios, but only Level 1 Licensed Coaches count towards coaching leadership requirements.

Game Coaches are volunteers who support the management of games and festivals. They do not require formal coaching qualifications but must operate under the supervision of a Level 1 Licensed Coach and must not lead activity independently. Game Coaches must have a basic understanding of the age-group rules and the Safe Play Code.

#### **3.2 Coach Registration**

All coaches must be registered on GameDay. This ensures compliance with safeguarding, insurance, and governance requirements.

#### **3.3 Coaches' Code of Conduct**

Coaches must:

- Prioritise player safety and wellbeing
- Promote enjoyment, learning, and inclusion
- Model respectful behaviour at all times
- Support match officials and festival hosts
- Ensure all players receive equal playing opportunities

Coaches must not:

- Prioritise winning
- Encourage aggressive or unsafe play

- Use negative, intimidating, or punitive coaching methods

### **3.4 Coach Presence on the Field**

At younger age groups, coaches may be permitted on the field to support learning and guide players. The specific rules for coach involvement are set out in the age group playing rules.

### **3.5 Training Sessions**

Training sessions must:

- Be planned and purposeful
- Include appropriate warm-ups and cool-downs
- Follow the Safe Play Code
- Use age appropriate equipment
- Use age appropriate games and activities
- Ensure all players are actively involved
- Be fun

### **3.6 Managing Playing Time**

Coaches must ensure that all players receive fair and meaningful playing time at festivals and matches. No child should be left out or marginalised. Age group playing rules stipulate playing times.

### **3.7 Communication with Parents and Carers**

Coaches should maintain positive, respectful communication with parents and carers, ensuring they understand:

- The purpose and spirit of Primary Rugby League
- The non-competitive nature of the programme
- Expectations around behaviour and support
- Any relevant safety or welfare information

### **3.8 Responsibility for Compliance**

Coaches are responsible for ensuring that all coaching activity complies with:

- These Primary Rugby League Rules
- The Safe Play Code
- RFL safeguarding and welfare policies
- Club policies and procedures
- RESPECT Code of Conduct

## **4. Safeguarding & Welfare Requirements**

4.1 Commitment to Safeguarding is central to all Primary Rugby League activity. Every club, coach, volunteer, parent, and festival host shares responsibility for ensuring that children are safe, supported, and treated with respect at all times.

4.2 Safeguarding Standards All Primary Rugby League activity must comply with:

- [The RFL Safeguarding Policy](#)
- The RFL Code of Conduct
- The RFL Anti-Bullying Policy
- The RFL Social Media and Communications Guidance
- All relevant legislation and best practice guidance

These standards apply equally to training, festivals, matches, club events, and online communication.

## **4.3 DBS Requirements**

Any adult working with or around children in a coaching, team manager, first aider, or regular volunteer role must hold a valid Enhanced DBS with the appropriate workforce category.

No adult may be involved in Primary Rugby League activity until their DBS status is confirmed.

## **4.4 Safeguarding Training**

All coaches and volunteers must complete the required safeguarding training and keep it up to date. Clubs are responsible for ensuring that all relevant individuals complete refresher training when required.

## **4.5 Club Welfare Officer (CWO)**

Every club must have at least one trained and active Club Welfare Officer who:

- Acts as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns
- Supports coaches and volunteers
- Ensures compliance with RFL safeguarding standards
- Maintains accurate safeguarding records

The CWO must be visible, accessible, and known to parents and volunteers.

## **4.6 Reporting Concerns**

Any safeguarding concern — no matter how small — must be reported immediately to:

- The Club Welfare Officer
- The RFL Safeguarding Team (where appropriate)

Concerns must never be ignored, dismissed, or handled informally.

#### 4.7 **Supervision & Ratios**

Clubs must ensure appropriate adult to child ratios at all training sessions, festivals, and matches. Children must never be left unsupervised.

#### 4.8 **Photography & Video**

Clubs must follow the [RFL's photography and video guidance](#). This includes:

- Gaining appropriate consent
- Avoiding images that identify children individually
- Ensuring images are used safely and appropriately

Festival hosts must communicate their photography policy clearly to all attending clubs.

#### 4.9 **Changing Rooms & Toilets**

Adults must not change or shower with children. Clubs must follow the RFL's guidance on [supervising changing areas](#), ensuring privacy, safety, and appropriate boundaries.

#### 4.10 **First Aid & Medical Welfare**

Every team must have access to a trained first aider and an appropriate first aid kit. Festival hosts must ensure that first aid provision is available throughout the event.

#### 4.11 **Concussion & Head Injuries**

All concussion incidents must be managed in line with the RFL's concussion protocols. Any child suspected of having a concussion must be removed from play immediately and must not return until medically cleared.

#### 4.12 **Behaviour & Conduct**

All adults must model positive behaviour. This includes:

- Respecting match officials/coaches
- Supporting all children, not just their own team
- Avoiding aggressive or confrontational behaviour
- Encouraging enjoyment, effort, and teamwork

Poor behaviour from adults will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the activity.

#### 4.13 **Online Conduct**

All communication with children must be appropriate, transparent, and in line with RFL guidance. Coaches must not communicate privately with children via personal messaging apps or social media.



## **5. Fixtures, Festivals & Match Administration**

### **5.1 Purpose of Fixtures and Festivals**

Primary Rugby League fixtures and festivals exist to provide children with enjoyable, developmentally appropriate playing opportunities. They are not competitive events and must be delivered in a way that prioritises safety, inclusion, and fun.

### **5.2 Fixture Structure**

#### **5.2.1 Under 6–8 (Tag Rugby)**

Under 6 to Under 8 fixtures are delivered through Tag Rugby, using small sided games in localised multiteam activity formats (sometimes referred to as “festivals,” though terminology may be updated). Clubs are grouped geographically to reduce travel while still allowing occasional cross area fixtures, with teams rotating across short games, typically three 10-minute matches per session—and hosting responsibilities shared between clubs every few weeks. The purpose of this format is to provide a fun, safe introduction to Rugby League with maximum ball in hand time, high engagement, and a strong focus on enjoyment and movement skills. Whilst reducing time and travel requirements at younger ages.

Teams will be allocated groups and venues by the league, these will be confirmed closer to the season when a more accurate gauge of playing numbers can be established to ensure a good number of children attend each venue.

#### **5.2.2 Under 9**

Under 9 fixtures continue to use activity based, multiteam formats, but with a wider range of opponents than at U6–U8. Teams take part in short, rotated games against clubs from a broader geographical area—for example, Wigan teams playing Warrington teams, or Wakefield teams playing Leeds teams—while still operating without league tables or rankings. This structure provides a smooth transition from purely local activity to slightly broader competition, maintaining the core ethos of fun, inclusion, and development.

Teams will be allocated groups and venues by the league, these will be confirmed closer to the season when a more accurate gauge of playing numbers can be established to ensure a good number of children attend each venue.

#### **5.2.3 Under 10–11**

Under 10 and Under 11 fixtures move into a traditional home and away format, with fixtures scheduled by the league and delivered in a development focused, non-competitive manner. Games follow clear rules, safeguarding expectations, and behavioural standards, providing players and clubs with a structured environment that prepares them for entry into Youth & Junior competitions (U12+) while ensuring that enjoyment, respect, and player development remain central.

### **5.3 Festival Hosting Requirements**

Festival hosts must ensure:

- A safe, well organised environment

- Adequate first aid provision
- Clear communication with attending clubs in the week leading up to the day
- Age appropriate pitch layouts
- Sufficient space between pitches
- A welcoming, child centred atmosphere

Hosts must also ensure that all coaches, volunteers, and spectators follow the Codes of Conduct.

#### **5.4 Team Organisation at Festivals**

- 5.4.1 Teams should be grouped by age and, where possible, by similar experience or ability to support balanced, enjoyable games.
- 5.4.2 Teams may be mixed or rebalanced on the day to ensure fairness and inclusion.

#### **5.5 Match Duration & Format**

Match duration, pitch size, ball size, and playing format are set out in the age group--specific playing rules/ Festival hosts must follow these formats without alteration.

#### **5.6 Match Officials**

- 5.6.1 Match officials may be used at festivals, but they are not mandatory at all age groups.
- 5.6.2 Where match officials are used, they must be treated with respect at all times.
- 5.6.3 At younger age groups, coaches may support officiating from the field in line with the age-group rules.

#### **5.7 Behaviour & Sideline Management**

- 5.7.1 All adults must model positive behaviour. This includes:
  - Encouraging effort and teamwork
  - Supporting all children
  - Avoiding negative or confrontational behaviour
  - Respecting match officials and festival hosts
- 5.7.2 Shouting instructions aggressively, disputing decisions, or creating a hostile environment is not acceptable.
- 5.7.3 Festival hosts may remove individuals whose behaviour breaches the Code of Conduct.

#### **5.8 Cancellations & Weather**

- 5.8.1 Safety is the priority. Festivals or fixtures must be cancelled or paused if:
  - The playing surface becomes unsafe
  - Weather conditions pose a risk
  - Visibility is significantly reduced
  - Lightning is present

5.8.2 Hosts must communicate cancellations promptly to all attending clubs.

## **5.9 Player Welfare During Festivals**

5.9.1 Clubs must ensure that players receive adequate rest between games.

For weekly festivals at U6–U9, the standard playing times set out in the Playing Rules must be followed.

For day-long summer festivals involving multiple teams and extended schedules, players may exceed the usual age-group playing time only if they are given significantly longer rest periods between fixtures. However, no player should exceed a total of one hour of playing time across the entire day.

5.9.2 Children must have access to drinking water at all times.

5.9.3 Coaches must monitor players for signs of fatigue, injury, or distress and act immediately if concerns arise.

5.9.4 These requirements are in place to protect children's health, safety, and enjoyment. Younger players fatigue more quickly, are still developing physically and cognitively, and are more vulnerable to heat, dehydration, and overexertion. Longer rest periods and a maximum total playing time help reduce the risk of injury, ensuring all players can participate safely throughout the day.

## **5.10 Recording of Results**

5.10.1 Results must not be recorded, published, or used to rank teams.

5.10.2 Festivals may recognise positive values such as teamwork, effort, or sportsmanship, but not competitive outcomes.

## **5.11 Responsibility for Compliance**

Festival hosts, coaches, and clubs share responsibility for ensuring that all fixtures and festivals comply with these rules and uphold the spirit of Primary Rugby League.

## **5.12 Support & Resources**

To support clubs and volunteers in delivering high-quality Primary Rugby League activity, the following resources will be provided:

- Festival/Activity Guides: Templates for pitch layouts, formats, and hosting responsibilities.
- Coaching Workshops: Regional conferences and online modules to train new and existing coaches in Primary Rugby League delivery.

## **CUB/TOTS ACTIVITY**

1. A child can register to participate in cub/tot activity rugby league from the age of 4 and can play until they finish reception.
2. The purpose of this activity is to introduce children to Rugby League in a non-contact, fun, safe, and developmentally appropriate manner.
3. The focus of the session should be to develop children's movement skills to prepare them for a life in sport and physical activity.
4. The UKCC Level 1 qualification offers a range of activities that are suitable for participants.
5. Clubs are not permitted to arrange fixtures. Children develop at different rates and may not be psychologically, physically and socially ready to enter a competitive environment. A poor experience of Rugby League could put them off sport for life.
6. Coach Qualification - A minimum of a valid UKCC Level 1 is required to coach at this level.

Coaches must hold an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.

## **SAFE PLAY CODE**

This Safe Play Code has been written in order to promote safety and good conduct within the Primary Rugby League versions of the game. It will provide the best possible on-field environment for the development of young Rugby League players, particularly in the areas of actively controlling undesirable actions and behaviour.

### **Section 1 - The Tackle Zone**

#### **The Code: Tackles above the armpits**

When a ball carrier is advancing in an upright posture, any tackle by the defender in which contact is made above the armpits is deemed to be an infringement.

### **Section 2 - Dangerous Tackles**

#### **The Code: Tripping or throwing an opponent**

It is an infringement if the tackler trips or uses his or her legs in any way during a tackle. This applies even if the defender already has a hand on the ball carrier (i.e., the Cumberland throw).

#### **The Code: Lifting 1**

Adopting a crotch hold is not permitted. Placing either the hand or arm in the crotch region at any time is an infringement.

#### **The Code: Lifting 2**

Vertical lifting is an infringement. Should a referee anticipate this is going to happen in a tackle he or she should blow the whistle immediately to prevent it from occurring.

#### **The Code: Lifting 3**

The ball carrier cannot be lifted and driven. A tackle in which the ball carrier is lifted and remains off the ground for two or more steps is an infringement. However, this should not be confused with a driving tackle when the ball carrier is knocked off their feet.

#### **The Code: Shoulder charge**

Defenders are not allowed to shoulder charge the ball carrier to affect a tackle. A defender who runs at a ball carrier and makes no attempt to tackle, grab or hold the ball carrier, but merely attempts to affect the tackle by the use of the shoulder shall be deemed to have committed an infringement.

#### **The Code: Flopping**

A defender cannot drop or fall on a prone player. If the ball carrier is prone or stationary on the ground it is an infringement to drop, dive or fall on that player. The tackle will be deemed complete by the defender simply putting a hand on the ball carrier.

#### **The Code: Slinging**

The use of the ball carrier's arm or jersey to sling a player to the ground is not permitted. Any defender who uses the arm or jersey of the ball carrier to complete a tackle is committing an infringement.

### **Section 3 - Hand-off or Fend**

#### **The Code: Dangerous use of the hand**

An attacking player cannot thrust out his or her arm and contact a defender above the shoulder. Any player that hands off or fends above the shoulder will be deemed to have infringed.

In Tag formats at U6 – U8 attackers cannot hand off/fend or protect their tag from defenders, they should use evasion skills to beat players.

#### **Section 4 – Verbal abuse and foul language**

##### **The Code: Unacceptable language**

The use of obscene, threatening, racist, denigrating, and abusive language is not permitted. There is a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable language and behaviour based on individual's gender identity, race, age, disability, faith or sexual orientation. Any form of verbal abuse, threatening language or sledging will be deemed an infringement.

#### **Section 5 – Tackle Shields & Tackle Bags**

Under no circumstances must a coach, volunteer or parent hold a tackle shield for a child to tackle. An adult can hold the top of a tackle bag for a child to tackle.

### **Playing Rules & Regulations: Common Across All PRL Age Groups**

These rules apply to every Primary Rugby League age group. To make them easier for coaches, players, and parents to understand, they have been taken directly from the 2026 age-group rules and set out here in one place.

- The game is to be called Primary Rugby League and is a modified version of Rugby League, and must be played under the Safe Play Code rules.
- The game will be played with a size three standard Rugby League ball.
- Try Scoring: A try is scored in the normal way by placing the ball down over the opponent's try line.
- There are no scrums in Primary RL.
- There is no ball-stealing permitted in Primary RL.
- Any errors in Primary RL (knock on, forward pass, player in touch) are dealt with by the ruling of the age group – and will restart via a PTB.
- Foul Play: Any act of foul play that contravenes the Safe Play Code will result in the coach stopping the game and explaining the offence to all players. Following this, play will continue.
- Sin Bin does not apply. However, coaches are encouraged to give players guilty of foul play a timeout where required.

**Coach Qualification** – A minimum of a valid UKCC Rugby League Level 1 is required to be an assistant or head coach at this level. They must have a valid licence which requires an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.

**Games Coaches** may manage games under the supervision of a Level 1 Licensed Coach. They do not need to be qualified but must have a basic understanding of the rules and the Safe Play Code. For full coaching requirements, including supervision and leadership expectations, see Section 3 (Coaching Requirements).

**NB.** These rules recognise the custom and practice of some playing leagues to allow coaches on the field of play during games to facilitate the development of inexperienced players.

**Coach to Develop not to Win**

## UNDER 6s RULES 2026

1. Every child plays all the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured or choose not to be on the field.)
2. The recommended number of players per team shall be four, with a maximum of five and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays, teams can be flexible, for example, two teams of four and one of five.
3. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 30 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
4. Size of the playing area is 25m x 12-15m.
5. Tag is the mandatory format for this age group.
  - When playing Tag Rugby, all players wear a tag belt, which has two ribbons (tags) attached to it with Velcro.
  - The belt is worn around the waist and on the outside of the clothing. Shirts should be tucked in.
  - The tags are positioned on either side of the hips.
6. The six-play rule applies. This means that every team must complete a full set of six plays, including errors or a Try being scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to allow players to execute the skills of the game without experiencing any fear of failure and to give every team the opportunity to play a full set of six each time. This rule also allows for each player to get an equal amount of time attacking and defending.
7. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking teams try line.
8. The 'Tackle' (Tag)
  - Only the player with the ball can be 'tackled' (tagged), and a tag is simply the removal by a defender of one of the two ribbons from the ball carrier.
  - Ball carriers can run or dodge potential taggers, but **cannot fend them off or guard or shield their tags in any way.**
  - The defender then holds the tag above their head and shouts "tag" for all to hear.
  - Once tagged, the player in possession of the ball must attempt to stop as soon as possible and then must replace their tag before playing the ball.
9. After each tag all defending players must retire four metres before the PTB restart. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.

There are no markers.

The acting halfback must pass the ball after each PTB. (They cannot run)

The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m (i.e. if a tag is made closer to the opponent's try line, then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
10. If the ball goes into touch, the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the sideline and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
11. When an attacking player has their tag removed before they place the ball down in the opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player had their tag removed, unless it is on the 5<sup>th</sup> play where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.



## UNDER 7s RULES 2026

1. Every child plays all the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured or choose not to be on the field.)
2. The recommended number of players per team shall be four, with a maximum of five and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays, teams can be flexible, for example, two teams of four and one of five.
3. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 30 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
4. Size of the playing area is 25m x 12-15m.
5. Tag is the mandatory format for this age group.
  - When playing Tag Rugby, all players wear a tag belt, which has two ribbons (tags), attached to it with Velcro.
  - The belt is worn around the waist and on the outside of the clothing. Shirts should be tucked in.
  - The tags are positioned on either side of the hips.
6. The six-play rule applies. This means that every team must complete a full set of six plays, including errors or a Try being scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to allow players to execute the skills of the game without experiencing any fear of failure and to give every team the opportunity to play a full set of six each time. This rule also allows for each player to get an equal amount of time attacking and defending.
7. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking teams try line.
8. The 'Tackle' (Tag)
  - Only the player with the ball can be 'tackled' (tagged), and a tag is simply the removal by a defender of one of the two ribbons from the ball carrier.
  - Ball carriers can run or dodge potential taggers **but cannot fend them off or guard or shield their tags in any way.**
  - The defender then holds the tag above their head and shouts "tag" for all to hear.
  - Once tagged, the player in possession of the ball must attempt to stop as soon as possible and then must replace their tag before playing the ball.
9. After each tag, all defending players must retire four metres before the PTB restart. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.

There are no markers.

The acting halfback must pass the ball after each PTB. (They cannot run)

The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m (i.e. If a tag is made closer to the opponent's try line, then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
10. If the ball goes into touch, the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the sideline and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
11. When an attacking player has their tag removed before they place the ball down in the opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player had their tag removed, unless it is on the 5<sup>th</sup> play where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.

## UNDER 8s RULES 2026

1. Every child plays all the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured or choose not to be on the field.)
2. The recommended number of players per team shall be five, with a maximum of six and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays, teams can be flexible, for example, two teams of five and one of six.
3. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 30 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
4. Size of the playing area is 25m x 15-18m.
5. Tag is the mandatory format for this age group.
  - When playing Tag Rugby, all players wear a tag belt, which has two ribbons (tags) attached to it with Velcro.
  - The belt is worn around the waist and on the outside of the clothing. Shirts should be tucked in.
  - The tags are positioned on either side of the hips.
6. The six-play rule applies. This means that every team must complete a full set of six plays, including errors or a Try being scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to allow players to execute the skills of the game without experiencing any fear of failure and to give every team the opportunity to play a full set of six each time. This rule also allows for each player to get an equal amount of time attacking and defending.
7. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking team's try line.
8. The 'Tackle' (Tag)
  - Only the player with the ball can be 'tackled' (tagged), and a tag is simply the removal by a defender of one of the two ribbons from the ball carrier.
  - Ball carriers can run or dodge potential taggers, **but cannot fend them off or guard or shield their tags in any way.**
  - The defender then holds the tag above their head and shouts "tag" for all to hear.
  - Once tagged, the player in possession of the ball must attempt to stop as soon as possible and then must replace their tag before playing the ball.
9. After each tag, all defending players must retire four metres before the PTB restart. The tagged player should restart the game by a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.

There are no markers.

The acting halfback must pass the ball after each PTB. (They cannot run)

The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m (i.e. if a tackle is made closer to the opponent's try line, then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
10. If the ball goes into touch, the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the side line and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
11. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.

b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in-goal area will result in a PTB restart 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled, and it is counted as one of the six tackles.

## UNDER 9s RULES 2026

1. Every child plays all the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured or choose not to be on the field.)
2. The recommended number of players per team shall be six, with a maximum of seven and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays, teams can be flexible, for example, two teams of six and one of seven.
3. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 30 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
4. Size of the playing area is 35m x 20m.
5. Tackle is the recommended format for this age group.
6. The two-error rule applies. Teams' handover possession once they have made a second error in a set of 6. Teams still retain the ball for a set of 6 when a try is scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to start to introduce players to the consequence of losing possession when an error is made. Retaining the ball when a try is scored should still provide an equal balance of attacking and defending during the game.
7. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking team's try line.
8. After each tackle, all defending players must retire four metres before the PTB restart. The tackled player should restart the game by a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.  
No markers.  
The acting halfback must pass the ball after each PTB. (They cannot run)  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m (i.e. if a tackle is made closer to the opponent's try line, then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
9. Grubber kicks only, are allowed only on the last tackle. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
10. If the ball goes into touch, the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the sideline and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
11. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.  
b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in-goal area will result in a PTB restart 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled, and it is counted as one of the six tackles.

## UNDER 10s RULES 2026

1. As many children as possible should be given an opportunity to play all the time. Try to limit the number of substitutes by modifying numbers, e.g. if both teams have 16 players, play 2 games of 8 a side, instead of 1 game of 9 a side with 7 substitutes.
2. The maximum number of players per team shall be nine, with a minimum of four. Teams can be flexible, for example, one team of seven and one of nine, or two teams of eight.
3. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 40 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is 2 games of 20 minutes.
4. Size of the playing area is 50m x 30m. (Based on 9 players, the width should be reduced by roughly 3m per player when playing lower numbers)
5. Tackle is the recommended format for this age group.
6. The two-error rule applies. Teams hand over possession once they have made a second error in a set of 6. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to start to introduce players to the consequence of losing possession when an error is made. Once a team has scored, they hand over possession. The opposition starts with a play the ball 10m from their own line after conceding a try.
7. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 10m from the attacking team's try line.
8. After a tackle, all defending players must retire five metres before the PTB restart. The tackled player should restart the game with a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback or the dummy half chooses to run with the ball (scoot).  
No marker.  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m (i.e. if a tackle is made closer to the opponent's try line, then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
9. Teams are allowed one scoot from dummy half per set of 6 tackles; the dummy half can't score, but they can be tackled, which encourages players to push with the ball player and develop their support play.
10. Kicking out of hand (grubber, chip, cross field) is allowed on the last tackle only. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
11. If the ball goes into touch, the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the sideline and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
12. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.  
b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in-goal area will result in a PTB restart 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled, and it is counted as one of the six tackles.

## UNDER 11s RULES 2026

1. As many children as possible should be given an opportunity to play all the time. Try to limit the number of substitutes by modifying numbers, e.g. if both teams have 18 players, play 2 games of 9 a side instead of 1 game of 11 a side with 7 substitutes.
2. The maximum number of players per team shall be eleven, with a minimum of six. Teams can be flexible, for example, one team of 9 and one of eleven.
3. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 40 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is 2 games of 20 minutes.
4. Size of the playing area is 50-60m x 40m. (Based on 11 players, the width should be reduced by roughly 3m per player when playing lower numbers)
5. Tackle is the recommended format for this age group.
6. Teams hand over possession once they have made an error in a set of 6. The opposition receives the ball where the error was made. Once a team has scored, it also hands over possession. The opposition starts with a play the ball 10m from their own line after conceding a try.
7. At the beginning of each game, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 10m from the attacking team's try line.
8. After each tackle, defending players must retire seven metres before the PTB restart.

The ball must be played backwards with the foot. The team in possession must retire behind the acting half-back. One active marker can be present at the PTB restarts. The ball is in play once it is played backwards (there should be no delay in playing the ball backwards once the player has placed the ball on the ground).

Dummy half can run - without forfeiting possession if tackled but cannot score. This encourages players to push with the ball player and develop their support play.

The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m (i.e. if a tackle is made closer to the opponent's try line, then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
9. Kicking out of hand (grubber, chip, cross field) is allowed. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
10. If the ball goes into touch, the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the sideline and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
11. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.  
b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in-goal area will result in a PTB restart 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled, and it is counted as one of the six tackles.